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CIA BOSS SABOTAGES POPE PROBE

STAT

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WASHINGTON — New York Sen. Alfonse D'Amato accused CIA Director William Casey yesterday of covering up the Soviet-Bulgarian connection of the plot to kill the Pope.

In a telephone interview with The Post upon his return from Rome, D'Amato revealed that Italian authorities told him they were "shocked" by the way the CIA was trying to "obstruct and deflect" the investigation of the Bulgarian connection to the assassin's attempt.

"I was told that the CIA is using disinformation and all sorts of other tactics to divert, disguise

and actually block this investigation," he said.

Asked if he was suggesting that Casey himself is involved in a coverup, D'Amato said "Yes."

D'Amato also said U.S. Embassy officials in Rome did everything

they could to prevent him from investigating, the matter himself.

He said U.S. Ambassador Max Baab sent him a telegram before he left saying "Don't Come."

D'Amato also said a staffer on the Senate Intel-

ligence Committee was prevented from going with him on the trip because of CIA pressure.

"And while I was there I had to scratch, stumble and fight for everything."

He said he would complain personally to

President Reagan and National Security Adviser William Clark about his findings.

"It's very suspicious. It smells of a coverup."

D'Amato's statement comes one day after it was revealed that President Reagan himself called Casey on the carpet for the CIA's mishandling of the case.

But other sources said the CIA made the decision to stymie the probe in Casey's absence.

The CIA's General Counsel Stanley Sporkin reportedly told European field agents to drop the matter after he checked with officials at the State Dept.

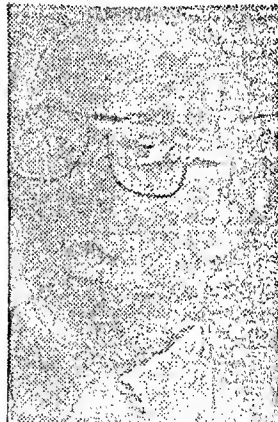
Many officials at the State Dept. are anticipating a summit meeting between Reagan and Soviet strongman Yuri Andropov — the ex-KGB

chief suspected of being the mastermind of the plot — and do not want to antagonize him with a strong pursuit of the assassination attempt.

But D'Amato said he was told by Italian officials there is strong evidence of direct links between the Soviet-controlled Bulgarian Secret Service and the plot to kill the Pope, despite CIA claims that Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca was insane or lied to cooperate with Italian police.

He revealed there is other evidence that the Bulgarians are using Italian agents in a plot to discredit Lech Walesa, leader of the banned Solidarity Union in Poland, and that the Bulgarians are masterminding a

huge gun-running and heroin-smuggling operation involving the Sicilian Mafia and Turkish businessmen



SEN. D'AMATO
Fight for info.

